(19) World Intellectual Property Organization International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date 28 June 2001 (28.06.2001)

(10) International Publication Number WO 01/46550 A1

- (51) International Patent Classification7: E21B 7/20, 10/00
- (21) International Application Number: PCT/GB00/04936
- (22) International Filing Date:

21 December 2000 (21.12.2000)

(25) Filing Language:

0018309.5

English

(26) Publication Language:

English

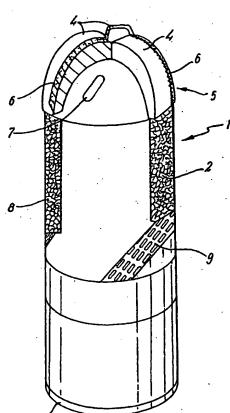
(30) Priority Data: 22 December 1999 (22.12.1999) 9930287.9 27 July 2000 (27.07.2000)

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- (81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AT (utility model), AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, CZ (utility model), DE, DE (utility model), DK, DK (utility model), DM, DZ, EE, EE (utility model), ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: DRILLING BIT FOR DRILLING WHILE RUNNING CASING



(57) Abstract: A drill bit for drilling casing in a well bore. The drill bit is constructed from a combination of relatively soft and relatively hard materials. The proportions of the materials are selected such that the drill bit provides suitable cutting and boring of the well bore while being able to be drilled through by a subsequent drill bit. Methods of applying hard materials to a soft material body are provided.

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(84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Published:

With international search report.

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

DRILLING BIT FOR DRILLING WHILE RUNNING CASING

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3 The present invention relates to drilling tools as are 4 typically used for drilling well bores.

5

Conventionally, when drilling a well bore of the type used 7 in oil or gas production, a string of drill pipe having a drill bit on the lower end thereof is advanced into the ground. As the drill is advanced into the ground it encounters different rock formations, some of which may be 10 unstable. To minimise problems which may be incurred by 11 12 running the drill bit from one formation to another, it is common practice to run the drill bit to a predetermined 13 depth, and then remove or "trip" the drill string from the bore. Structural casing, typically made of heavy steel 15 piping, is then lowered into the bore and cemented in place 16 17 when set. The casing acts as a lining within the bore, and collapse of the newly drilled 18 prevents

20

19

21 As a consequences of having to carry out the above

contamination of the oil or gas reservoir.

22 procedure, the cost and time taken to drill a bore is

delayed.

increased as it is necessary to perform a number of trips
down the well. It will be appreciated that at the
considerable depths reached during oil and gas production
the time taken to implement complex retrieval procedures to
recover the drill string can be very long, and accordingly
the beginning of profitable production can be greatly

7

9 An attempt has been made to mitigate this problem with the 10 as "drilling introduction of a procedure known 11 This procedure relies on the attachment of a 12 drill bit to the actual casing string, so that the drill 13 bit functions not only to drill the earth formation, but also to guide the casing into the well bore. This is advantageous as the casing is pulled into the bore by the 15 16 drill bit, and therefore negates the requirement of having 17 to retrieve the drill string and drill bit after reaching a 18 target depth to allow cementing.

19

20 While this procedure greatly increases the efficiency of 21 the drilling procedure, a further problem is encountered 22 when the casing is cemented upon reaching the desired 23 The advantage of drilling with casing is that the 24 drill bit does not have to be retrieved from the well bore. 25 However as a result, should drilling to a greater depth be 26 required after cementing the casing, the subsequent drill 27 bit has to pass through the previous bit in order to 28 This is extremely difficult as drill bits are 29 required to remove hard rock material and are accordingly 30 very resistant and robust structures typically manufactured 31 materials such as Tungsten Carbide or steel. 32 Attempting to drill through an old drill bit may result in

damaging the new drill bit, adversely affecting the efficiency of any further drilling. Consequently, the damaged drill bit would have to be retrieved from the bore and replaced, and the time and cost advantage gained by using the drilling with casing procedure would be lost.

6

It would therefore be a distinct advantage to provide a drill bit for use during drilling with casing which can 9 drill rock and earth formations but which can also be drilled through by another drill bit. The provision of a 10 drill bit which allows the passage of a subsequent drill 11 bit through it, would reduce the number of trips into a 12 . 13 well bore required during a normal drilling procedure and minimise the risk of damaging any further drill bits 14 15 introduced into the bore.

16

In our prior Patent Application PCT/GB99/01816 we have 17 18 suggested that the drill bit has hard drilling material 19 that may be moved away from the remaining body of the drill 20 shoe prior to subsequent drilling through of the drill bit. We have also proposed EP0815342, a drill bit or shoe having 21 hard drilling material placed only on the drill shoe or bit 22 23 at the peripheral circumference thereof, and specifically 24 only at the sides of the drill bit or shoe where the 25 diameter is greater than the internal diameter of the 26 casing. The present invention is distinguished from both of these teachings in that it provides for a drill shoe or bit 27 28 that has hard material within the area below the internal 29 boundaries of the casing, and does not require moving parts 30 to be displaced before subsequent drilling through can be 31 commenced.

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2 It is an object of the present invention to provide a drill

3 bit for use in a well bore which can drill earth and rock

4 formations and guide a casing string into a well bore

5 simultaneously.

6

7 It is a further object of the present invention to provide

8 a drill bit for use in a well bore which is constructed

9 from a material which allows a second drill bit to drill

10 through it.

11

12 It is a yet further object of the present invention to

13 provide a drill bit for use in a well bore which allows a

14 second drill bit to drill through it, such that the second

15 drill bit is not damaged and can progress beyond the point

16 reached by the original drill bit within the well bore.

17

18 According to a first aspect of the present invention there

19 is provided a drill bit for drilling with casing in a well

20 bore, said drill bit being constructed from a combination

21 of a relatively soft material and a relatively hard

22 material, wherein the hard material is suitable for cutting

23 earth or rock, and wherein the combination of materials is

24 in such proportion and in such arrangement to allow a

25 subsequent further drill bit to drill through it.

26

27 Preferably the drill bit is substantially constructed from

28 the relatively soft material, wherein the relatively soft

29 material is adapted to be drilled through with a standard

30 earth drill bit.

- 1 Preferably the drill bit is formed with a body having or
- 2 being associated with a nose portion upon which are cutting
- 3 members, wherein the body is made substantially from the
- 4 relatively soft material and at least the leading edge or
- 5 cutting surface of each cutting member is made from the
- 6 hard material.

- 8 Preferably the hard wearing material is a hard material
- 9 such as tungsten carbide or a superhard material such as
- 10 diamond composite or cubic boron nitride although any other
- 11 suitable material may be used.

12

- 13 Preferably the soft, drillable material is aluminium.
- 14 Alternatively the soft drillable material is copper or
- 15 brass alloy, although any other suitable material could be
- 16 used.

17

- 18 There may be a plurality of soft materials and there may be
- 19 a plurality of hard materials.

20

- 21 In one possible embodiment the nose is directly coated with
- 22 the hard wearing material.

23

- 24 Optionally the coating is a continuous layer or film that
- 25 covers the surface of the nose.

- 27 Alternatively the coating is non-continuous, such that the
- 28 nose is afforded areas which are not coated by the hard
- 29 wearing material, wherein upon rotation of the drill bit
- 30 the cumulative effect of the coated areas gives complete
- 31 circumferential coverage of the dimensions of the drilled
- 32 hole.

2 Alternatively the coating may be applied to an intermediate 3 which is amenable to the nose of the drill bit. 4

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The intermediate may be attached to the nose prior to coating with the hard wearing material. Optionally the intermediate may be coated with the hard wearing material

10 pr

) prior to attachment to the nose.

Preferably the intermediate is nickel.

11

12 In a second embodiment the hard wearing material is applied 13 to the nose in the form of preformed elements wherein the 14 cumulative effect of said preformed elements is to cover

15 the surface of the nose and so act as a coating thereof.

16

17 The preformed elements may be chips or fragments of the 18 hard material.

19

20 The preformed elements of the hard material may be directly
21 applied to the nose.

22

23 Alternatively the preformed elements of hard material are 24 applied to the nose following the application of an 25 amenable intermediate material to the nose or the preformed 26 elements.

27

28 Preferably the amenable intermediate material is nickel
29 substrate.

The preformed elements may be attached to the nose by

standard techniques such as brazing, welding or shrink

3 fitting.

Optionally the preformed elements have a re-enforced

structure to aid drilling of hard formations. Where the

preformed elements have a re-enforced structure, preferably

the preformed elements are pre-weakened prior to attachment

to the nose in order to allow fracture of the preformed

10 elements upon drilling.

11

12 Preferably the drill bit may also comprise a plurality of

13 flow ports to allow fluid bypass and lubrication of the

14 bit.

15

Preferably the drill bit also comprises a stabiliser or 16

17 centraliser.

18

19 Preferably the drill bit also comprises reaming members.

20

21 According to a third aspect of the present invention there

is provided a method of fixing a hard or super hard wearing 22

23 material to a drill bit nose made of a soft drillable

24 material, wherein a jet is used to blow gases at very high

25 speeds towards a cast of the nose and particles of the hard

26 or superhard wearing material are introduced into the gas

27 stream, wherein the kinetic energy of the procedure is

28 converted to thermal energy which welds the particles to

29 the nose.

30

31 According to a fourth aspect of the present invention there

32 is provided a method for fixing a hard or superhard wearing

- 1 material to a drill bit nose made of a soft drillable
- 2 material, wherein particles of the hard or superhard
- 3 wearing material are placed within a mould and thereafter
- 4 the soft drillable material is poured in molten form into
- 5 the mould, such that on cooling said hard or superhard
- 6 wearing particles are set in situ.

- 8 Alternatively the hard wearing material can be fixed to the
- 9 nose by a standard technique such as brazing, welding and
- 10 electroplating.

11

- 12 In order to provide a better understanding of the
- 13 invention, example embodiments of the invention will now be
- 14 illustrated with reference to the following Figures in
- 15 which;

16

- 17 Figure 1 illustrates a drill bit in accordance with the
- 18 present invention;

19

20 Figure 2 is an elevated view of the top of the drill bit;

21

- 22 Figure 3 illustrates an individual cutting member isolated
- 23 from the drill bit.

24

- 25 Figure 4 illustrates an elevated view of the top of an
- 26 alternative embodiment of a drill bit in accordance with
- 27 the present invention; and

28

- 29 Figure 5 illustrates a pre-formed element for attaching to
- 30 the nose portion of a drill bit.

Referring firstly to Figure 1, a drill bit generally depicted at 1, is comprised of a cylindrical body 2, that can be mounted on the lower end of a casing string (not shown) via a thread end connection 3 that can mate with the casing. The drill bit 1 is further comprised of a plurality of cutting members 4 which are fixed to the opposite end of the body 2 to the thread end connection 3, namely the nose end 5. The cutting members 4 extend out from the nose end 5.

10

The nose 5 and cutting members 4 are constructed from a 11 material such as aluminium, copper or brass alloy which is 12. 13 soft enough to allow the aforementioned nose 5 and members 14 4 to be drilled through by a second and subsequent drill 15 bit (not shown). The cutting members 4 are substantially 16 covered by a relatively hard material 6 typically being a 17 hard material such as tungsten carbide or a superhard material such as diamond composite or cubic boron nitride. 18 19 In the depicted embodiment the relatively hard material 6 20 is located at the "leading edge" of the cutting member 4. 21 In this respect the "leading edge" refers to the side of 22 the cutting member 4 which directly contacts the ground or rock upon rotation of the drill bit 1. It is recognised 23 24 that whilst in the depicted embodiments the hard wearing 25 material is afforded to the leading edge of one or more 26 cutting members 4 on the drill bit 1, the invention is not limited to this configuration. For example the hard 27 28 wearing material may be applied to the nose 5 in an 29 embodiment having no cutting members 4 or may be applied to 30 the whole surface of the cutting members 4.

drill bit is located.

The relatively hard material 6 may be applied to the 1 2 cutting members 4 or nose 5 as a coating, that is as a 3 layer or film. In one embodiment a continuous layer of the material 6 may cover the entire surface of the nose 5, or 4 5 the cutting members 4. Alternatively a non-continuous 6 layer of the material may coat the nose 5 or cutting 7 members 4. In this instance, the surface of the nose 5 or cutting members 4 will comprise areas that are not coated. 8 However, upon rotation of the drill bit 1, the cumulative 9 effect of the coated areas will be complete circumferential 10 coverage of the inside diameter of the casing in which the 11

1213

It is recognised in the present invention that direct 14 15 application of some coatings to the nose material may not 16 be practical. For example, extremely hard tungsten carbide 17 particles cannot be applied to the preferred nose materials (e.g. aluminium or copper) by lasercarb welding. 18 19 material can be applied to soft nickel, however machining 20 said drill bit 1 entirely from nickel would be unduly 21 Therefore in an alternative embodiment, a expensive. 22 coating of the hard material 6 is applied to an 23 intermediate, typically being nickel substrate, which is 24 then attached to the nose 5 of the drill bit 25 Alternatively the nickel substrate can be attached to the 26 nose 5 prior to coating.

27

In a further embodiment preformed elements of the hard or superhard material 6 are applied to the nose 5 or cutting members 4 of the drill bit 1 in place of a coating of film. Said preformed elements may be chips, or fragments of the hard material 6. Typically the culmative effect of the preformed elements is to cover the surface of the nose 5 or the cutting members 4 and so act as a coating thereof. The preformed elements may be directly applied to the nose 5 or cutting members 4 or may be applied after applying an amenable material either to the nose 5 or cutting members 4 or the preformed element itself. The amenable material is typically nickel substrate.

8

9 The layout of cutting members 4 can be seen more clearly in 10 Figure 2 which shows the nose end 5, viewed from above, and 11 in Figure 3 which shows an individual cutting member 4. It 12 can be seen in Figure 3 that the cutting means 6 has teeth 13 formations 10 which allow any "chips" of material remaining 14 in the well bore to pass through the blade structure.

15

The nose 5 further comprises flow by areas 7 that allow fluid circulated within the well bore to lubricate the surfaces of the bit 1. The body 2 also comprises a stabiliser or centraliser 9 which maintains the drill bit in the centre of the well bore, and reaming members 8, which function to remove any irregularities or obstructions from the wall of the bore.

23

In use, the drill bit 1, is run into a well bore (not 24 shown) from the surface, typically whilst being rotated. 25 The drill bit 1 pulls a casing string (not shown) as it is 26 advanced into the newly formed well bore to a predetermined 27 depth. Upon reaching this depth, the casing is cemented to 28 strengthen the lining of the bore. If drilling beyond this 29 first assembly is required, a second drill bit of a smaller 30 diameter to the first is run into the well inside the 31 casing string from the surface. 32

Upon reaching the first assembly, the new drill bit can 2 drill through the soft drillable material of the original drill bit 1 and cutting members 4, and therefore can 5 proceed to a point beyond the depth reached by the original The hard or super hard drill bit 1 within the well bore. 6 : 7 material 6 fixed to the cutting members 4 of the original 8 drill bit 1 disintegrate into shavings when drilled. shavings released into the well bore when the original bit 9 10 1 is drilled through do not obstruct the bore and are therefore not detrimental to the subsequent drilling. 11 process. In this manner a further section of the bore can 12 be drilled beyond the previously attained depth without 13 damage to the new drill bit and without needing to retrieve 14 15 the first assembly from the bore.

16

When used for drilling through harder formations a thicker 17 18 section of the preformed element will be required. However it will be appreciated that in such an instance, 19 preformed elements would not be drillable. Thereby in the 20 event that a thicker element is required, said element is 21 typically pre-weakened prior to attachment to the nose 5 or 22 cutting members 4. In this manner, the elements will have 23 the attributes of high stiffness whilst drilling but low 24 resistance to fracture whilst being drilled. 25 formed elements can then be applied directly to the nose 5 26 or cutting members 4 by brazing or shrink-fitting or could 27 be attached to an amenable material, typically nickel 28 29 substrate.

30

31 A first method for fixing the hard or superhard material 6 32 is now outlined. A jet is used to blow gases at very high

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- 1 speeds towards a cast or block of the cutting member 4 or
- 2 nose 5, and which is made from the soft, drillable
- 3 material. Typically a speed in the region of Mach 2 is
- 4 used. Very fine particles of the hard or superhard wearing
- 5 material are introduced into the gas stream. The resulting
- 6 kinetic energy is converted to thermal energy in the
- 7 particles, and accordingly the heated particles "weld" to
- 8 the leading edge of the cast or block therefore forming a
- 9 thin layer or film.

10

- It will be appreciated that the abovedescribed method could
- 12 be used with particles of the hard or superhard material,
- 13 or with intermediates coated by the hard or super hard
- 14 material or with preformed elements as described above.

15

- 16 An alternative method for fixing preformed hard or
- 17 superhard particles to the cutting members 4 is to place
- 18 them within a drill mould. Molten drillable soft material
- 19 that will eventually become the nose 5 of the drill bit 1
- 20 is then poured into the mould. On cooling the metal
- 21 provides a drill bit 1 that has the hard or superhard
- 22 particles set in situ.

23

- 24 The present invention is inherent with significant
- 25 advantages in that the time taken for the drilling
- 26 operation can be greatly reduced as there is no need to
- 27 implement complex and timely retrieval operations to
- 28 recover apparatus from the bore. As a result the
- 29 profitable stage of production can be begin much sooner.

- 31 A further advantage, is that unlike the drill bits known to
- 32 the art, the drill bit of the present invention is

- 1 drillable by another drill bit and the risk of damage to
- 2 the second drill bit is therefore reduced. Furthermore as
- 3 the cutting means of the cutting members consist of fine
- 4 layers or cutting elements formed from hard material, they
- 5 disintegrate into shavings upon drilling and therefore do
- 6 not act as an obstruction to any subsequent apparatus that
- 7 is advanced into the well.

- 9 Further modifications and improvements may be incorporated
- 10 without departing from the scope of the invention herein
- 11 intended.

Claims:

2.

A drill bit for drilling with casing in a well bore, 3 said drill bit being constructed from a combination of 4 5 a relatively soft material and a relatively hard material, wherein the hard material is suitable for 7 cutting earth or rock, and wherein the combination of is in such proportion and in such 9 arrangement to allow a subsequent further drill bit to 10 drill through said drill bit.

11

12 A drill bit as claimed in Claim 1 substantially 2. 13 constructed from the relatively soft material, wherein 14 the relatively soft material is adapted to be drilled 15 through with a standard earth drill bit.

16

17 A drill bit as claimed in Claim 1 or Claim 2 formed 18 with a body having or being associated with a nose - 19 portion upon which are cutting members, wherein the 20 body is made substantially from the relatively soft 21 material and at least a leading edge or cutting 22 surface of each cutting member is made from the 23 relatively hard material.

24

25 A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding 26 Claims, wherein the hard material is tungsten carbide.

27

·· 28 A drill bit as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 3, 29 wheren the hard material is diamond composite.

30

31 A drill bit as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 3, 32 wherein the hard material is cubic boron nitride.

7. A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding
 Claims wherein the soft material is aluminium.

4

8. A drill bit as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 6,6 wherein the soft material is copper or brass alloy.

7

8 9. A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding9 Claims having a plurality of soft materials.

10

11 10. A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding
12 Claims having a plurality of hard materials.

13

14 11. A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding
15 Claims wherein the hard material is provided as a

16 coating.

17

18 12. A drill bit as claimed in Claim 11 wherein the coating 19 is applied to the nose portion.

20

21 13. A drill bit as claimed in Claim 11 or Claim 12 wherein22 the coating is a continuous layer or film.

23

- 24 14. A drill bit as claimed in Claim 11 or Claim 12 wherein
 25 the coating is non-continuous, such that surfaces of
 26 the drill bit are afforded areas which are not coated
 27 by the hard material, wherein upon rotation of the
 28 drill bit, the cumulative effect of the coated areas
 29 gives complete circumferential coverage of the
- dimensions of the drilled well bore.

A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding . 1 15. 2 Claims wherein the hard material is applied to an 3 intermediate which is amenable to the nose of the drill bit. A drill bit as claimed in Claim 15 wherein the 16. intermediate is nickel. A drill bit as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 10 17. 10 wherein the hard wearing material is applied to the 11 nose as preformed elements wherein the cumulative 12 effect of said preformed elements is to cover the 13 surface of the nose and so act as a coating thereof. 14 15 A drill bit as claimed in Claim 17 wherein the preformed elements are chips or fragments of the hard 16 17 material. 18 19 19. A drill bit as claimed in Claim 17 or 18 wherein the 20 preformed elements are attached to the nose by 21 brazing. 22 23 20. A drill bit as claimed in any one of Claims 17 to 19 24 wherein the preformed elements have a reinforced 25 structure to aid drilling of hard formations. 26 27 A drill bit as claimed in Claim 20 wherein the 28 preformed elements are pre-weakened prior 29 attachment to the nose in order to allow fracture of 30 the preformed elements upon drilling.

- 1 22. A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding
 2 Claims also comprising a plurality of flow ports to
 3 allow fluid bypass and lubrication of the bit.
 4
 5 23. A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding
 6 Claims also comprising a stabiliser or centraliser.
 7
 8 24 A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding
- 8 24. A drill bit as claimed in any one of the preceding9 Claims also comprising reaming members.

11 A method of fixing a hard or super hard wearing 25. 12 material to a drill bit nose made of a soft drillable 13 material, wherein a jet is used to blow gases at very 14 high speeds towards a cast of the nose and particles 15 the hard or superhard wearing material 16 introduced into the gas stream, wherein the kinetic 17 energy of the procedure is converted to thermal energy 18 which welds the particles to the nose.

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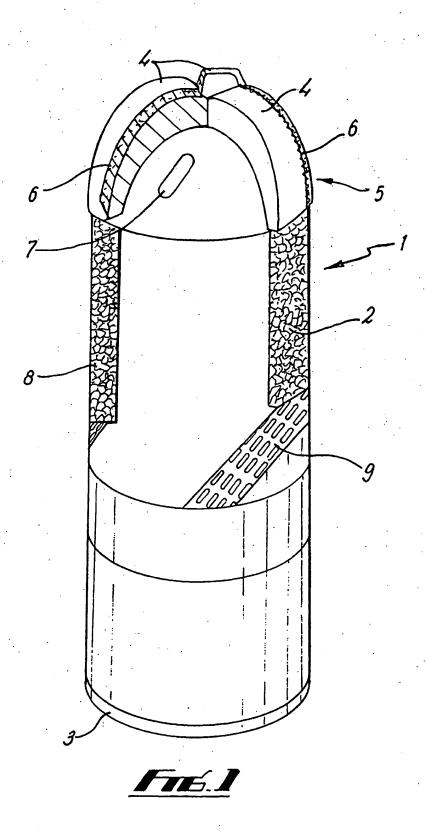
20 26. A method for fixing a hard or superhard wearing
21 material to a drill bit nose made of a soft drillable
22 material, wherein particles of the hard or superhard
23 wearing material are placed within a mould and
24 thereafter the soft drillable material is poured in
25 molten form into the mould, such that on cooling said
26 hard or superhard wearing particles are set in situ.

27

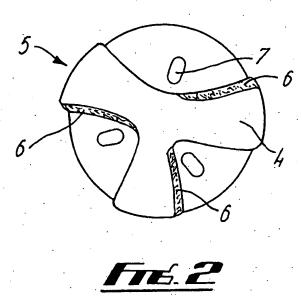
28 27. A method for drilling a well bore comprising attaching
29 a drill bit in accordance with any one of the
30 preceding Claims to casing, drilling a bore through
31 the earth formation and subsequently running a further

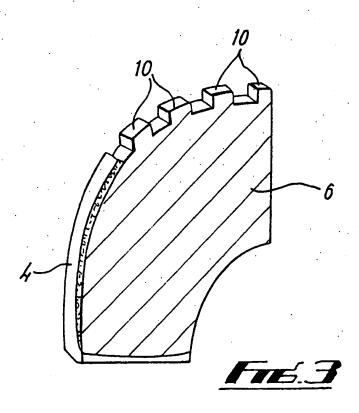
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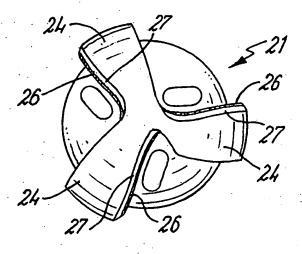
drill bit in the well inside the casing and drilling through the first drill bit.

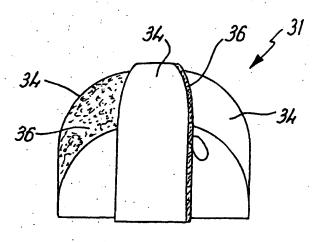


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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Ini .tional Application No PCT/GB 00/04936

PCT/GB 00/04936 A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC 7 E2187/20 E218 E21B10/00 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) E218 IPC 7 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used) EPO-Internal C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT Relevant to claim No. Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages 1,3,5,9, US 5 957 225 A (SINOR LAWRENCE ALLEN). X 28 September 1999 (1999-09-28) 22,27 column 5, line 15 - line 20 4,6-8,11-19, 23-26 column 6, line 5 - line 12 column 13, line 37 - line 40 column 13, line 57 - line 60; figures 6A, 6B, 7US 5 096 465 A (CHEN SY-HWA ET AL) 4,6 17 March 1992 (1992-03-17) column 1, line 27 - line 30 column 10, line 44 - line 49 Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. Patent family members are listed in annex. Special categories of cited documents: *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention earlier document but published on or after the international "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to filing date document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone document of particular relevance; the claimed invention citation or other special reason (as specified) cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such docudocument reterring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or ments, such combination being obvious to a person skilled document published prior to the international filing date but *&* document member of the same patent family tater than the priority date claimed Date of mailing of the international search report Date of the actual completion of the international search 15/03/2001 6 March 2001 Name and mailing address of the ISA Authorized officer

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

In Alonal Application No PCT/GB 00/04936

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Information on patent family members

Int stional Application No PCT/GB 00/04936

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